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## DISCUSSION OF EDUCATION

CLARENCE E. MELENEY

Associate Superintendent of Schools

**I**N the absence of the city superintendent of schools on account of illness due to the severe stress of his arduous duties, I have been requested to take his place and speak of the educational work of the public school system. The chairman suggested that I "emphasize the practical workings of our school machinery from the lowest grades to the highest as that problem presents itself to the board of superintendents." The facts and statistics submitted are a matter of record and are given as a background designed to show the extent of our system of schools and its vastness as an educational problem as compared with other state and city school systems. The views and opinions must be considered as my own, drawn from an experience in the board of superintendents of almost twenty years. Whether the city superintendent endorses these views must be left for him to state if he wishes to do so.

The supervising force of the New York school system comprises the board of superintendents, including the city superintendent and eight associates; the board of examiners, including the city superintendent and four examiners; twenty-six district superintendents; the directors of departments—music, physical training, drawing, shopwork, cooking, sewing and kindergarten; the inspectors of ungraded classes; special teachers of music, physical training and sewing; the bureau of attendance; and the bureau of reference and research.

There are twenty-three district superintendents each having supervision of two local school board districts. The average number of pupils enrolled in elementary schools in a district is 15,500. In Brooklyn it is over 19,000. One district superintendent has the supervision and administration of evening schools; one of vacation schools, playgrounds and recreation centers; one is assigned to the supervision of high schools.

The bureau of lectures is under a director independent of the board of superintendents.

The city is divided into divisions, two for high schools (now under one associate city superintendent) and six for elementary schools apportioned thus: Manhattan, 2; Brooklyn, 2; Harlem and Bronx, 1; Queens and Richmond, 1. At present the Brooklyn division superintendents are temporarily assigned to supervision and organization of pre-vocational activities and extension work of high school pupils, their places being taken by one associate city superintendent.

The teaching force in day schools includes 3 training school principals and 120 training school teachers, 23 high school principals and over 2,200 high school teachers, 420 elementary school principals and about 17,500 elementary school teachers.

There are two vocational schools for boys and one trade school for girls. There are schools and classes for the blind, deaf, cripples, and feeble-minded; for tubercular and anemic children. Classes for convalescent children are operated in several hospitals. During last year there were 114 evening schools, elementary, high, and trade schools, with an average nightly attendance of over 55,000 pupils. There were 36 vacation schools, 213 playgrounds and 62 evening recreation centers.

A comparison of the New York public school system with that of other cities and states, and with the rest of the state of New York may be interesting. From the last published report of the United States commissioner of education, in the number of teachers and pupils in the public day schools New York city is four times as great as all the other cities of the state having a population of 25,000 people; greater than the five next largest cities, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, St. Louis and Cleveland combined; greater than all the cities of the New England states combined; or of New Jersey and Pennsylvania; or of Ohio, Illinois and Michigan; or of the Pacific states with Missouri and Nebraska besides. These facts seem to justify the number of supervising officers and our organization.

In 1896 under the Pavey law the New York city school system was reorganized. A board of superintendents was established. This is the distinctive feature of the system. At the time of consolidation, borough school systems were established on the same plan, and in 1902 the present consolidated school system went into effect. The charter confers upon the board of superintendents the following functions:

1. The nomination of district superintendents, directors, principals and teachers of training schools, principals of high schools, irrespective of eligible lists, and of inspectors, assistant inspectors, principals and teachers of elementary schools, evening schools, vacation schools and playgrounds, and of teachers of high schools from eligible lists; promotions and transfers of all principals and teachers, and approval of applications for increase in salary, except approval for superior merit in high schools and training schools, which is vested in the board of examiners.

2. The recommendation of grades and qualifications or licenses.

3. The establishment and organization of all kinds and grades of schools and the classification of pupils.

4. The recommendation of courses of study in all schools, and the preparation of syllabi.

5. The recommendation of rules for the administration and management of schools.

6. The recommendation of text-books and supplies for all schools. In short, all the educational proposals to be acted upon by the board of education are formulated by the board of superintendents.

These recommendations are made by the board of superintendents upon reports of standing and special committees of the board. These committees prepare their reports upon information obtained by personal inspection and investigation in the several divisions and fields of activity of the several members, and upon reports of district superintendents and principals, organizations of teachers, local school boards, directors and bureaus. Every proposition has to be carefully worked out and put into definite shape with facts, statistics and explanations sufficient to enable the board of education and its committees to act intelligently. All the statistics upon which the educational budget for the general school fund, the special school fund, so far as equipment of schools is concerned, the corporate stock budget for sites and buildings are based, have to be furnished by the board of superintendents.

To emphasize the practical workings of our machinery as requested by the chairman, I will explain briefly some of the operations of the board and committees:

The nomination, promotion and transfer of teachers is a great work. Last year in the elementary schools 1,887 new teachers were appointed and 2,195 other teachers were transferred or assigned. In the training schools and high schools 355 new teachers were appointed. All nominations of teachers of evening schools, vacation schools and playgrounds, were made by the board of superintendents and approved by the board of education.

The committee on high schools and training schools deals with high school nominations. The committee on elementary schools nominates all other principals and teachers except those for evening schools, vacation schools and trade and vocational teachers. The Hanus reports recommended that this work should be done by the city superintendent. This would be an impossible task with which he should not be burdened. It requires an intimate knowledge of the conditions in the schools, the nature of the positions to be filled, and the wishes and preferences of principals and candidates, that only superintendents in close touch with the schools can have, and it demands the services of a corps of clerks having records well in hand. The interviews necessary for a

complete understanding of this problem consume a great amount of time.

Consider again the matter of recommending text-books, library books and supplies, which also it has been said the city superintendent should do. Last year lists of text-books, library lists and supply lists were prepared by the board of superintendents. Every book and article of apparatus had to be examined and approved by committees of superintendents, principals, and teachers before action by the board of superintendents and the board of education.

New courses of study and syllabi for the high schools, elementary schools, evening schools, trade and vocational schools have been constantly undergoing change and revision. These are necessary to meet the changed conditions in the schools, the demands of the business world, the views and wishes of the board of education and the natural evolution of educational theories and practise. The high schools are of three types, the general, the commercial and the technical and manual training. Some schools, like the Manual Training and Bushwick in Brooklyn, and the Bryant in Queens, for boys and girls, embrace all three types. The other high schools have at least two features. Every high school having girls now offers courses in domestic science and art, and by the adoption of a new course last year every school having the general course may also give commercial work. It is a mistake to suppose that even the general high school course is designed only to fit pupils for college and other higher institutions. In our general course elective studies are offered in modern languages, science, mathematics and every subject that seems to be necessary for the equipment of boys and girls for complete living.

In my last annual report will be found a section dealing with the scholarship of first year pupils in high schools and a formulation of the methods used in the high schools to adapt the instruction to the capacity and ability of the pupils, prepared by a committee of high school principals that devoted months to the study of the problem. Everything that can be done by the principals and teachers to hold the students and to train and instruct them for efficiency in life is being done.

I know of no city in the country where so liberal a provision is made for high school students. The liberality of these courses taxes the budget to the limit and it is now a serious question whether the city can afford to carry so rich a program. The board of superintendents is overwhelmed by the proposals constantly put before it for the inauguration of new activities in the high schools, the elementary schools and other schools and classes. For many years the instruction and training to meet the

needs of over-age, backward and defective children has been undergoing transformation. We are now face to face with the problem of educating children of all degrees of ability and intelligence. The enforcement of the compulsory education law has brought this about. No city in the country has made greater progress in this line of work than has the city of New York.

At every stage of advancement we have been restrained by the limitations of the school budget while at the same time we have been criticized for lack of progress. Superintendents and principals have visited other cities, studied reports, and collected information from all sources to enable the board to formulate its recommendations. New features of school activities have been tried in our schools and instituted for experimentation. The problems confronting the educational department of this city cannot be appreciated by any persons not intimately connected with the work and the conditions under which the work is carried on. The amount of study, investigation, and constructive organization necessary to inaugurate and maintain a progressive system engages the constant, earnest and persistent effort of the department of education. A board of education, however large or small, cannot make all the investigations and formulate all the plans for the operation of this school system. Nor can one man as city superintendent perform the duties of the board of superintendents.

When I say that all these duties and powers should not be thrust upon the city superintendent, I mean any city superintendent, whoever he may be. He should be left free for larger problems and unhampered with the details of investigation and formulation of plans. The distribution of all this varied work and responsibility among the members of the board is the only safeguard to the superintendent.